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## ABSTRACT

*Providing*

*a* ~~Methods and apparatus are disclosed for providing~~ a firewall for isolating network elements from a publicly accessible network to which such network elements are attached. The firewall operates on a stand alone computer connected between the

5 public network and the network elements to be protected such that all access to the protected network elements must go through the firewall. The firewall application running on the stand alone computer is preferably the only application running on that machine. The application includes a variety of proxy agents that are specifically assigned to an incoming request in accordance with the service protocol (i.e., port

10 number) indicated in the incoming access request. An assigned proxy agent verifies the authority of an incoming request to access a network element indicated in the request. Once verified, the proxy agent completes the connection to the protected network element on behalf of the source of the incoming request.